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MISCELLANY

THE FIRST INTELLIGIBLE ANSWER

Several people, says Mr. Don Marquis in the New York *Evening Sun*, have asked us to tell them just exactly what this Vorticist movement in art is.

Vorticism, is the result when Cubism and Futurism rush into a vacuum from opposite sides, meeting in the centre.

They collide and whirl, producing something like a maelstrom in a turpentine bottle.

The harder they hit the faster they whirl.

The faster they whirl, the more vortex there is.
And the more vortex there is, the more vertigo.

Some would define a Vorticist production as a vacuum surrounded by vertigo in motion.

The vacuum temporarily broken up when Cubism and Futurism meet soon reestablishes itself when the whirl begins.

The faster the whirl, the less there is in the calm spot in the centre—the more vacant the vacuum.

This is the scientific explanation.

Intellectually speaking, Vorticism is a revolving guess pivoted on nothing.

And there is a great mechanical and philosophical idea behind that. The less pivot you have the less friction you have and the faster you revolve.

And if the pivot is nothing at all, the friction is absolutely nil. The result being that the speed of the revolution may become infinite.

Thus we get another notion of Vorticism—Vorticism is the n th power of vertigo; vertigo in the infinite degree.

The fellow who got it up, whoever he was, had been looking at the universe, and he had stared at it so long that he finally saw the centre of it—saw the whole thing spinning round and round and saw the absolutely calm spot that it was spinning on, the only motionless thing in a cosmos the remainder of which couldn't stop if it wanted to; and after he had looked at that calm spot, that pivot of the universe for a while, he saw that it wasn't there at all, for it couldn't be there; it is too little to be there. And then he said to himself: This is a great discovery. I will either make a new religion of it or a new art.

And he tossed up a quarter, and it came down heads, and so he made a new art out of it.

Having told you what Vorticism is, we must go on and tell you how to look at it.

Don't look at it from the outside. You won't see anything at all if you do that.

Put yourself at the centre of the vortex, sit down on the pivot at the middle of the universe, place yourself in imagination at the imaginary axis of the cosmos, and watch what spins past you. That is the only way to look at it without becoming confused. If you try to look at it in any other way

you will be drawn into the eternal swirl revolving around the centre, and will become a part of that swirl, and you will go so fast that it will be impossible for you to fix your eye upon anything.

The only way to look at any art nowadays is to remain calm in the midst of revolution.

The Vorticists, having based themselves upon the universe itself, will last as long as the universe does. And the universe couldn't die (poor thing!) if it wanted to. For the first time in the history of art the absolute has been discovered and utilized.

But merely the will to understand it will not help you a great deal unless you know how to put yourself in the proper mood. To attain the proper mood, you must close your eyes and reflect upon how much universe there is, and how fast it is spinning, until you get dizzy. Dizzier and dizzier you will get, as you revolve with it, in imagination. And finally your dizziness will leave you, because all your ideas will be sucked out of your head by the motion of the universe. When this happens, and there is a complete vacuum where your mind was, that vacuum rushes and joins itself with the central and pivotal vacuum of the universe . . . and then you are in the right position from which to look at Vorticist art.

Which brings us to another great law: Any number of vacuums can occupy the same space at the same time.

Provided, of course, that the largest vacuum is no larger than the space into which it fits. All the smaller vacuums will fit into the larger vacuums on the telescopic principle. And even vacuums of absolutely equal size will fit into each other neatly. All you have to do is to shake a lot of them together and they sort themselves.

It is the same way with a lot of modern schools of art—some of the *vers libre* poets, et cetera, . . . all you have to do is to shake a lot of them together, and they sort themselves.

Thus we come to another great law showing the superiority of Art over Nature: Nature abhors a vacuum; but Art often builds itself upon one.

Is it all perfectly clear? Or are there any questions? If not, the class is dismissed.

Don Marquis

DURET ON WHISTLER

The volume on Whistler written in French by Théodore Duret has been translated into English by Frank Rutter and published by the Lippincott Company of Philadelphia. It is a handsome quarto with index and many excellent illustrations after pen and pencil drawings, etchings, pastels and oil paintings, not forgetting the portraits of Whistler's mother, of Carlyle and little Miss Alexander which have achieved great popularity in reproductions,